



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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January 17, 2013

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Local Health Emergency Team Sees No Shortage of Flu Treatments

Medical providers are adequately equipped to respond to the current level of flu in the community, a team of health officials and medical providers determined Thursday.

The local Health Emergency Advisory Team (HEAT) met at the request of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department to assess the community's ability to cope with the higher than usual number of flu cases this season. Members also agreed to coordinate their public messages about the disease to help residents make effective and informed decisions about public health.

Members of the team included representatives of the hospital, schools, pharmacies, health-care clinics, and the health department. The team is co-chaired by Melanie Reynolds, county health officer, and Dr. Will Snider, medical director for the health department and physician with the Cooperative Health Center.

"Basically, the team agreed that it's important to reiterate what we've been saying all along: wash your hands often, cover your cough, get vaccinated, and stay home if you're sick," said Reynolds. "That may sound simplistic, but that's how you stop the spread of flu."

Among other topics the team discussed:

- Local supplies of flu vaccine and other medical treatments are adequate for current needs. No shortage is anticipated.
- As of this week, there have been more than 200 known cases of flu in the county. Ten people have been hospitalized with serious symptoms.
- 91 percent of the flu viruses seen nationwide are strains covered by this year's flu vaccine.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that, with a very few exceptions, everyone over the age of 6 months should get vaccinated annually.
- If you've had a flu shot this season, you *do not* need another until next season. If you haven't had one yet, the best time to get one is now.
- Flu is highly contagious. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning a day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days **after** becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than 7 days. The CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do that no one else can do for you.
- Flu can result in serious secondary infections, like pneumonia. If you begin to feel better and then become ill again, contact your health-care provider right away.

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is to protect and improve the health of all county residents.*

- The health department has begun more detailed tracking of the flu, including the age of those who get it and whether they were vaccinated.

The team will meet again if flu levels continue to surge.

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